

Dear Kirk Lundby,

EXHIBIT NO. 7

DATE: 2-1-204
BILL NO. SB 82

I am writing you this letter as a concerned citizen of Montana. At the age of 15, I suffered a severe traumatic brain injury while snowboarding in Whitefish, MT. I have spent the past 11 years advocating for individuals with brain injury, promoting awareness of the deadly toll brain injuries have on Montana, and supporting programs that I know will prevent brain injuries. I do everything I can to prevent one more brain injury in our state, and to prevent one more family from the emotional and financial devastation that occurs after a brain injury.

I ask that you please remember me during the hearing for SB 82 to provide for a primary seat belt law. This law will save Montana money, generate money for Montana, and---most important of all---save the lives of individuals in Montana. There are too many crucial reasons to not let another legislative session pass without the creation of a primary seat belt law. A few of these critical reasons include:

- the millions of dollars from the federal government that Montana will receive for creating a primary seatbelt law
- not wearing a seatbelt **doubles** the chance of being seriously injured in a crash*
- \$36.7 million each year in direct inpatient health care costs could have been prevented in Montana through seat belt use*
- the hospital care of the **preventable** injuries sustained by uninsured and Medicaid covered unbelted occupants costs Montana over \$14 million each year*
- each driver in Montana pays an extra \$51 to subsidize unbelted occupants due to these excess health care costs*
- 58% of crash occupants in Montana who needed hospital care after a motor vehicle crash were unbelted, compared to 42% who were belted*

In closing, I offer you the story of my father, a longtime Montanan who does not like to be told what to do. We have differed in our view of a primary seat belt law for years. After presenting the financial benefits as described above, I had my father somewhat convinced. I then asked my father how much he would give to go back in time and create a law that required me to wear a ski helmet the day I was injured, therefore preventing the devastating trauma my brain endured. My father's reply was simple: Yes, he would give nearly anything to take away the lifelong consequences my brain injury has had on me and my family; and yes, every individual and family deserves a primary seatbelt law to protect them and their loved ones from the consequences of a brain injury.

My father now agrees with a primary seat belt law, and there are many other Montanans that agree with this law. Please protect our citizens and our children. No innocent child should ever be failed by a State, such as Montana, that lacks sufficient child seatbelt laws to protect him or her. Please support the residents of Montana by passing this bill and bringing millions in federal funding into our state. Also, please protect the residents of Montana by supporting this bill and reducing the costs that Montana residents pay for each unrestrained occupant with no insurance.

*Thank you for your time,
Julia Hammerquist*

- Data from the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center (November 2008) and the Montana Department of Transportation